

COVER TENNESSEE

An Update from the office of Governor Phil Bredesen

June 14, 2006

GOVERNOR BREDESEN SIGNS COVER TENNESSEE INTO LAW

NEW MODEL HOLDS PROMISE FOR HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF UNINSURED TENNESSEANS

This week Governor Phil Bredesen visited a Nashville-based small business to sign into law an innovative piece of legislation that extends health insurance to small businesses and uninsured working Tennesseans. The Cover Tennessee Act includes initiatives that extend health coverage to uninsured children, chronically ill adults and creates a low-cost insurance program for uninsured working Tennesseans.

Joining Bredesen at PlumGood Food, which has 23 employees, was a bipartisan group of state lawmakers, state officials and employees, representatives from the National Federation of Independent Business, small businesses owners, uninsured families and health care providers.

"Cover Tennessee is a fundamentally different approach to providing affordable and portable health insurance coverage to hundreds of thousands of Tennesseans who have no insurance today," said Bredesen. "We are taking a decidedly unique approach to bring health insurance back within the reach of working Tennesseans by relying on voluntary partnerships between the state, employers and the individual. This bold new path enjoys bipartisan support from the Tennessee General Assembly, the NFIB and other business groups and the state's health care industry."

During the bill signing, the Governor highlighted the differences between Cover Tennessee and other efforts to extend health insurance.

"With Cover Tennessee, the state is in control of the program's design, implementation and costs. And unlike other states, Cover Tennessee is voluntary," said Bredesen. "Our role as government is to ensure that anyone who wants health insurance has a shot at getting it, and that is what Cover Tennessee provides. But this is just beginning of the challenge. The success or failure of our efforts will depend on our ability to implement Cover Tennessee and attract the small businesses and uninsured individuals we want to help."



Governor Bredesen, with legislators and small business owners, signs Cover Tennessee into law.
June 12, 2006, at Plumgood Food in Nashville

The low-cost CoverTN insurance product is the centerpiece of Governor Bredesen's Cover Tennessee plan. CoverTN will provide targeted health benefits to working uninsured adults for about \$150 per month. Premiums will vary based on age, smoking status and weight. The premiums can be shared between the state and an individual or between the state, an individual and that person's employer.

Cover Tennessee expects to have more specific information about benefits packages as part of enrollment in Fall 2006, with benefits beginning in early 2007.

Signed into law today were several programs that extend health insurance to uninsured Tennesseans:

Cover Kids - Creates a partnership between the state and the federal government to extend comprehensive health coverage to uninsured children and pregnant women.

AccessTN - Provides a comprehensive health insurance plan for seriously ill adults who have previously been unable to obtain private insurance coverage. This is guaranteed issue, comprehensive health coverage for uninsurable adults and includes premium assistance for low-income participants.

CoverTN - Creates a partnership between the state, private employers and individuals to offer guaranteed, affordable, portable, basic health coverage for working Tennesseans who are uninsured. Includes an option for small businesses to offer CoverTN to all employees.

The legislation also creates **Project Diabetes**, which expands an educational pilot project to K-8 schools across the state to teach healthy lifestyles and eating habits and launches a grant program to expand treatment options focusing on reducing Type II diabetes and obesity.

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Cover Tennessee
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1-888-486-9355
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